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THE RISE OF IRANIAN BACKED MILITIAS INSIDE IRAQ

Foreign Relations Bureau - Iraq

مكتب العلاقات الدولية - العراق

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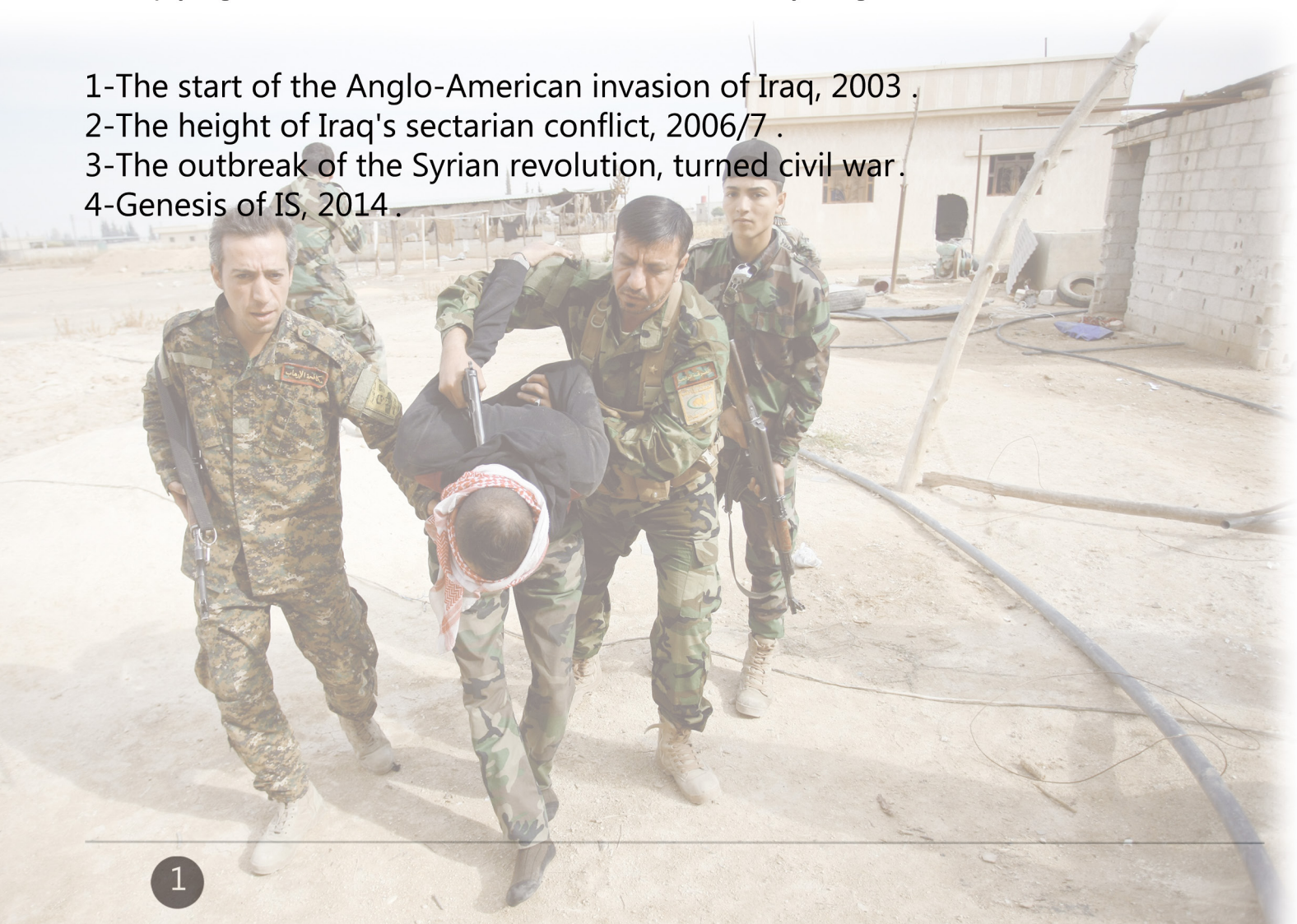
A GUIDE TO IRANIAN BACKED ORGANISED PARAMILITARY MILITIAS IN IRAQ

Introduction

The past two years have witnessed the steady rise of Iranian backed armed militias inside of Iraq, against the backdrop of a broadly anarchic situation. Their growth has been expedited by the government's loosening grip over its own security in the past decade. The more control the state loses, the greater the threats posed both by the Islamic State Group (IS) and Iranian supported militias.

Recent statistics reveal that there are an estimated 60 armed militia groups presently active throughout the country. Their emergence, subsequent transformation, and multiplying recruits can be broken down into four key stages.

- 1-The start of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, 2003.
- 2-The height of Iraq's sectarian conflict, 2006/7.
- 3-The outbreak of the Syrian revolution, turned civil war.
- 4-Genesis of IS, 2014.



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1-BADR CORPS

Of the first group to have burst onto Iraq's political landscape is the Hadi Al Ameri led, Badr militia. While it today consists of 30 thousands recruits, it grew out of humble origins in 1981 Tehran, with sponsorship from Iran. It served as the military arm for the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) - an exile oppositional group that fought against Saddam Hussein - and drew large numbers of recruits from the prisoners of war Iran captured, also referred to as Al-Taba'iyya. Badr corps were instrumental in launching numerous attacks against the Iraqi army fighting on the side of Iran during the drawn out eight year Iran-Iraq war

Anglo - American forces entered Iraq in 2003, the group re-emerged to occupy seats in the political establishments. From seditious activities to unparalleled brutality, it quickly acquired a fearsome reputation. Their status was characterised by the unfiltered violence they meted out and their assassination efforts against Iraqi intellectuals, scientists and doctors, and religious figures.

They still maintain a strong presence not only in the capital of Baghdad, but also in Diyala which shares a (197) kilometre wide border with Iran, and Babil province. Thirteen years since it returned to Iraq, it has grown into a formidable political force, with offices dotted across the country, in every province, with the exception of Anbar and Erbil.

It's members, most notably founder Hadi Al Amiri and, commander Abu Mehdi Al Mohandis have entered the political system, and whose militiamen have infiltrated security forces and national army.



2-ASA'IB AHL ALHAQ

Led by Qais Al Khazali (former Mahdi Army commander), Asa'ib Ahl Al Haq (AHH) initially emerged in 2006. They rose with strong backing from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force (IRGC), and IRGC Major General, Qasem Solaimani, who regularly accompanies AHH on combat operations. The group owns its own 24-hour satellite channel, Al 'Ahd, headquartered in the heart of Baghdad, renowned for broadcasting sectarian inspired content. Since its ascent the group has grown evermore powerful, conducting criminal activities with impunity. In their brief history they have been unstoppable in conducting kidnappings, extortion, attacks on places of worship, and theft of public and private property from areas liberated from IS (in Tikrit and Diyala). The group commands upwards of 1,500 fighters, many of whom fight under the auspices of state sponsored Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU), better known as Al Hash'd Al Sha'abi.



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3-KATA'IB HEZBOLLAH

The Iraqi branch of Hezbollah is commanded by a man little known to the west, called Abbas Muhammadawi . The armed faction maintains a heavy presence in and around the Baghdad belt, parts of Anbar province, alongside Salahuddin and Diyala . No different to other armed militia groups , Kata'ib hezbollah have succeeded in exacerbating sectarian tensions by perpetrating grave human rights violations against predominantly Sunni civilians . Their most serious crimes include summary executions and cases of rape in Jurf Al Sakhr, during the areas alleged liberation. They have two offices in Baghdad, and an estimated 1,500 fighters.



4-SARAYA AL SALAM

Saraya Al Salam (SS), whose name translates into 'Peace Brigades' was recently formed in 2014 by Moqtada Al Sadr . It emerged as the successor organisation to the Mehdi army. Although Sadr appeared on public in 2013 claiming the his Mehdi army was dismantled it remains active under new names. The splinter group is largely active in Baghdad, Salahuddin and parts of Diyala, but commands fewer recruits than before. It has offices predominantly in the capital, but a few scattered around the areas it operates inside. The militia presently consists of 1200 men. Like its predecessor, SS has actively been fomenting sectarian strife through various tactics including forced displacement through violence, random arrests, threats and abductions . The group's name change is believed to have been part of Sadr pre-planned attempt to recast the Mehdi army in a positive light away from its blemished history . Their objective as their tactics expose, is the permanent alteration of Iraq's demography by forcing people to emigrate.



5-LIWA ABU FADHL AL ABBAS

Abu Fadhl Al Abbas (AFA) brigade , is controlled by Shi'i cleric Qassim Al-Tai. He has recruited young men since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2012 , to fight against the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Many of its men were drawn from pre-existing militia's including AHH , the Mehdi army , and Hezbollah in Iraq, but has also received substantial Iranian assistance from the IRGC. Like other armed militia they rely heavily on extremist activities in shaping their influence. The bombing of Sunni villages is regularly practiced by AFA , seeking to induce irreversible changes in Iraq's demographic make-up .



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6-HARAKAT HEZBOLLAH AL NUJABA

This paramilitary, self branded as 'The Movement of God's Nobles', is a breakaway paramilitary from AHH, led by former Mehdi army leader Akram Al Kaabi, one of Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr's mentees. They emerged not long after the revolution in Syria developed into a civil war - vowing to defeat Syrian rebels and to protect the shrine of Sayyeda Zainab. The 2,500 man militia is comprised of three combat brigades, operating in Aleppo, Al Qusayr in Syria, and parts of Iraq. They also operate their very own weapons factories, manufacturing Ashtar rockets, and short-range missiles which they have fired into Sunni inhabited towns and villages. They are responsible for killing and severely injuring hundreds of innocents.



7-JAYSH AL MEHDI

The Mehdi army, was founded in 2003 as a counterforce to fight American troops, by Moqtada Al Sad, it's leader. It launched both large and small scale offensives against occupying forces. Not long after its emergence, the group grew exponentially, expanding beyond Sadrist held neighbourhoods. It's outgrowth was particularly noticeable between 2005 and 2007 - at the height of Iraq's sectarian civil war - exercising violence in proving its incontestable superiority. The fighting group developed a reputation for being the guardian of Iraq's Shia. The deeper sectarian strife grew, the dirtier the groups tactics became. Despite public announcements from Sadr that he would disband his Mehdi force, it operates until today, under different names.



8-MUKHTAR AMRY

The Mukhtar army was created in 2010 (not 2013 as is often claimed) by Hezbollah in Iraq's secretary-general, Wathiq Al Battat, to assassinate members of Iraq's now outlawed Ba'ath party and Al-Qaeda affiliates. They have wrecked sectarian havoc in numerous ways, with violent tactics and orchestrated killings of intellectuals, engineers and doctors of a Sunni background. They started off with number as big as 30,000 with many Iranian volunteers, but today the men commanded by the militia does not exceed 3,000.



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9-LIWA AL IMAM AL QA'IM

The 'Arising Imam ' (AIQ) brigade was founded by Haidar Al Aboudi in 2014. AIQ is commonly affiliated with PMU forces, recently having fought in Jurf Al Sakhr. Their activities have involved the deliberate destruction of civilian property. Their men number in at an estimated 1,200 fighters.



10-HEZB AL DAWA MILITIA

Hezb Al Dawa militia, as may be deductible from its name, exists under the command of Ibrahim Al Ja'afari. In his own words the militia is "active in Southern Iraq and its members number approximately at 3,000. Their responsibility is to kidnap and dismantle any group that opposes "Iran's politics in the region .



11-AI YAWM AL MAW'UD MILITA

Al Yawm Al Maw'ud (YAM), or 'Peace Brigade' militia has come to replace Sadr Mehdi army, active in Salahuddin, Anbar, Diyala and parts of Mosul before the genesis of IS in 2014. The groups roots are traceable back to the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, with allegiances to Moqtada Al Sadr. Their headquarters are situation in Baghdad and southern cities. Sunni dissidents are high on their list of targets, but not limited to them. They are often flanked by Iranian commanders from the Qods force, but remain relatively minute in size, relying instead on their allies. They have committed a litany of offenses included kidnappings, theft of civilian property and the deliberate destruction of homes .



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12-KATA'IB AL IMAM ALI

Founded in 2014, the Imam Ali brigade as France 24 once describes, are 'brutal fighters and skilled propagandists', made up of 3,500 men. Led by Shebl Al Zaydi (nicknamed Abu Mujtaba Al Shirazi), the militia receives ample backing from Iran with helicopters piloted by Iranians and thousands of volunteer fighters. Its members face serious allegations of murder, torture, and mutilation against civilian residents from liberated areas where the Brigade and IS fought. They are active mainly in the city of Amerli and Tuz Khormatu. Their men have their own official military uniforms, famously donned by celebrity fighter Abu Izraell. The 'Angel of Death' as he is commonly referred to was recently lauded for his fighting efforts by Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani's representative, despite circulating videos of him seen slicing corpses of men he claims are IS.



13-KATAIB SAYYID AL SHUHADAA

Sayyid Al Shuhadaa brigade was established mid-2013, led by Alhaji Wala, composed of approximately 2,000 fighters. They participated in military operations against IS in Samarra, Tikrit and Dour in Salahuddin. While they were formed to perform the duty of protecting Shi'i shrines, they face endless accusations of human rights violations against unarmed combatants. They are said to have carried out hundreds of arrests and executions on townsmen in areas where they fought, as well participating in the looting of civilian homes.



14-SARAYA JIHAD WA AL BINAA

Jihad wa al Binaa brigade initially formed mid-2014, serving as the military wing of a political movement known as 'Jihad and Binaa' led by Hassan Al Sari, former member of parliament belonging to Iraqi National Alliance (INA). Al Sari is also one of several SCRI leaders. He commands upwards of 3,000 militiamen. They have actively fought in battles on Diyala's border with Iran, and are said to have committed massacres against civilians in towns and villages in Ruwaished, Saadiyah, and Jowezira, displacing tens of thousands and torching orchards belonging to farmers from Diyala.



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15-DAWA PARTY MILITIA

The Dawa party militia is one of several militia elements sponsored by ex-prime minister Nouri Al Maliki . This particular outfit consists of several brigades supervised by political figures from within the political Dawa party. Maliki is one, another is current foreign minister, Ibrahim Al Jaafari , and former interim prime minister from 2005 to 2006. Political opponents are top of the groups target list, in addition to Sunni civilians . The militia Maliki commands are known for their sectarian motivated crimes, and unscrupulous behaviour. They are said to be responsible for the disappearance of hundreds of Sunni men, and for manning Maliki's secret prisons in Baghdad and Iraq's southern provinces .



16-KATA'IB ANSAR ALLAH AL-AWFIYYAH

Kata'ib Ansar Allah, The Loyal Partisans of God, was established in 2014, by Sheikh Haidar Al Gharawi. They roam the streets of Baghdad, Salahuddin, and some parts of Anbar province. Their sole responsibility is to fight against 'Sunni Jihadist' groups, as is often the message brandished across their official social media accounts . The group shares its name with another militia outfit called 'Kataib Ansar Allah' which broke away from 'Kata'ib Ansar Allah Al Awfiyyah' . The breakaway division identifies with Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani, whereas the former advertises Ayatollah Khamenei on its paraphernalia .



17-KATA'IB JUNUD AL IMAM

The Imam's Soldiers brigade was formed mid-2014, and is commanded by Ahmad Al Asadi, PMU spokesman . The brigade is one of several militias fighting under the PMU umbrella organisation, and had participated in the recent battle of Tikrit. They face allegations of having perpetrated human right violations in not only Tikrit, but also Baiji against Sunni residents of these towns and their clerics .



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18-KATAIB AHRAR AL IRAQ

The Liberals of Iraq Brigade has its roots in the death squads founded by Ahmad Chalabi and funded with assistance from Iran. It includes an estimated 1,000 fighters, many of whom have received training in Hungary, Israel and the United States, with rumoured links to US intelligence services. Their sole mission is to execute orchestrated assassinations. They also played a visible role in the destruction of public property, including Iraqi factories and armed robberies on banks. Back in 2004, they assisted with the American ambush on Fallujah, alongside the Badr brigade. They have now folded into the PMU umbrella organisation, participating in operations against the Islamic State.



19-SARAYA MUKHTAR THAQAFI

The Mukhtar Al-Thaqafi Brigade are commanded by Wathiq Al-Battat, who also instructs the Mukhtar army. Membership is estimated at 2,500. Its men have been notably engaged in assassination efforts against members and officers of the dissolved Baath Party. Kidnappings of suspected civilians by their members is not uncommon, in addition to forced disappearances. They can mainly be found in remote parts of Baghdad.



20-KATA'IB THAR ALLAH

Founded in the southern city of Basra Thar Allah Battalion (God's Revenge) was created in 2015 by Shi'i cleric Yousif Sinawi Al Mousawi. Their sphere of influence has mainly been restricted to the south of Iraq, with offices established in Missan, Nassriyyah and Talha. The armed group has been known to carry out targeted assassinations, in the organisations own words - 'hunting down and killing supporters of the former regime of Saddam Hussein' - particularly individuals that staffed its security and intelligence apparatus. The carried out intentional killings of intellectuals, academics, scientists and Sunni clerics, while targeting homes and mosques. Despite the death of its secretary-general, Al Mousawi in 2008, the group remains active, coalesced into SCIRI, headed by Ammar Al Hakim. They currently operate as part of PMU forces, assisting in assaults on IS strongholds.



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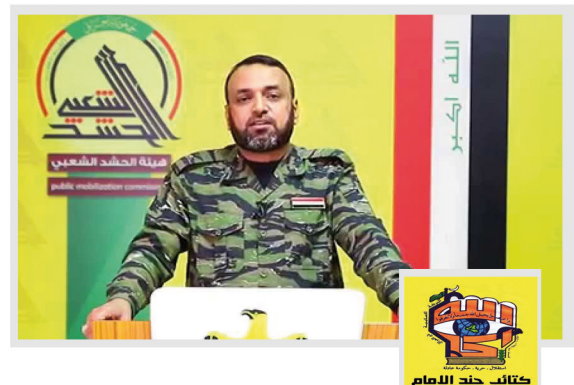
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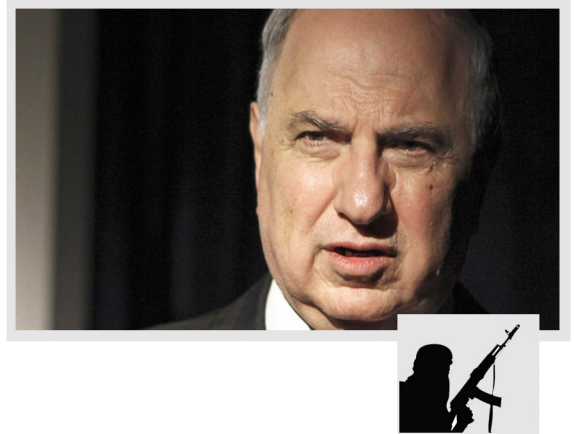
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27-AL MAJMU'AT AL KHAS'A

The special units, a sub-branch of the Mehdi Amry, operates under the command of Moqtada Al Sadr, who also directs 'The Promised Day' Brigade. It's operational tasks include assassination attempts in southern and central Iraq where the paramilitary operates .



28-LIWA QASM AL JABBARIN

The 'Crushing the Toughest' brigade is a militia group established in 2014 that presently occupies Al Nukhib, south of Anbar, close to Iraq's border with Saudi Arabia. The outfit also operates under the supervision of the Iraqi army's eighth division, stationed at the mid-point of the Euphrates river and around Karbala. In Nukhib they are said to have committed numerous crimes against the local population, and abducted men from surrounding areas .



29-KATA'IB AL GHADAB

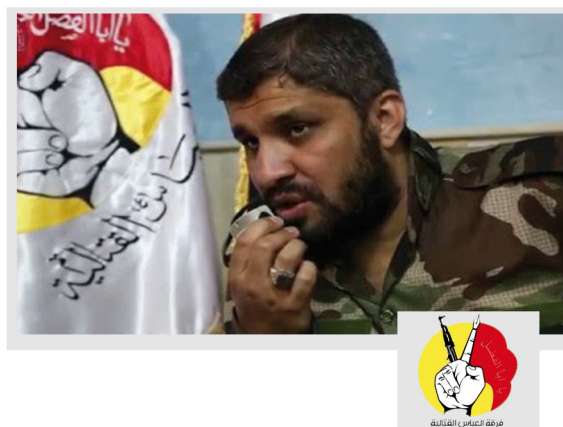
The 'Anger' brigade is another armed wing of the Islamic Dawa party commanded by Abu Al-Fiqar Al Sammari, and consists of various divisions. They have claimed a number of operations in areas of Salahuddin, Amariyat Al Fallujah, Diyala, and western Baghdad. Their ethnic cleansing efforts in western Baghdad, especially in mixed neighbourhoods, have been recorded. The Anger brigade's relationship or military alliances, with other militias anchored in Iraq remains hazy.



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30-FIRQAT AL ABBAS AL QATALIYYA

The Abbas combat battalion emerged in mid 2014, with the creation of PMU forces. The group operates under the auspices of a man known by the name Maitham Zaidi. Their areas of operation include Salahuddin, and southern Baghdad. They were involved in the latest military operations in Tikrit and Baiji alongside armed security forces. Their membership falls within the range of 5000 to 7000 fighters.



31-LIWA ASADULLAH

Liwa Asadullah, whose name directly translates as 'Lions of God' brigade, is led by militia commander Aqeel Al Moussawi since they formed in 2014. The men Moussawi directs have been deployed into Syria to fight for Bashar Al Assad's forces. Other divisions have been stationed around areas of Anbar province, in addition to Salahuddin and Diyala. In their areas of operation they have reportedly used systematic violence against Sunni inhabitants and their cities setting their homes and belongings ablaze.



32-KATA'IB ANSAR AL HUJJA

Led by Shi'i cleric sheikh Mohammad Al Kinani, 'Partisans of the hidden imam' (as the name translates) are closely tied to sectarian provocateur Nouri Al Maliki. They are deployed in areas of Salahuddin and Anbar, and recruits number around 1,500. They have an alliance with Saraya Al Khorasani, and face serious allegations of murder against inhabitants of Jurf Al Sakhr, Salahuddin and areas around the Baghdad belt.



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33-LIWA AL QARI'AT

The Calamity brigade is a armed Shi'i militia comprised of an estimated 14 smaller factions, that in total number at around 2,500 fighters . They have mainly fought in Syria in support of Bashar Al Assad , against Syrian opposition forces. They are led by Ahmed Zamili. In Iraq they are said to have committed heinous massacres and crimes against humanity in the Jurf Al-Sakhr area, killing, kidnapping and displacing of thousands of civilians .



34-SARAYA AL ZAHRAA

Al Zahraa brigade is another militia managed by Moqtada Al Sadr's subordinates, and has a sister branch in Bahrain. The militia force numbers at around 3,000 men, scattered around Samarra and Tikrit, where battles have recently been fought. Alongside kidnappings and assassinations, Al Zahra Brigade in Iraq are claimed to have bulldozed houses and orchards , forcing hundreds of families to relocate elsewhere .



35-SARAYA ANSAR AL AQEEDA

Also known as 'Supporters of the Creed' brigade, saraya ansar al aqeeda (SAA) emerged in 2014, concentrated mainly in the areas of south and east of Fallujah . They are supplied with light and heavy weaponry including tanks and armoured vehicles from Iran, and pledge allegiance to SCIRI leader Ammar Al Hakim . Hakim also oversees Iraqi cleric Jalaluddin al-Saghir's Al-Paratha Husseiniya militia . With their weapons supplies, SAA have been able to launch attacks of civilian population centres using Ashtar missiles . They are responsible for hundreds of civilians injuries and deaths .Casualties and victims have included women and children .



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36-LIWA AL MUNTATHAR

Al Muntathar brigade rose into existence back in 2014, led by Dagher Al Moussawi, and have been active in military operations in Jurf Al Sakhr and its surrounding villages. The militia also occupies a visible presence in southern Baghdad where it's 1,300 are situated, and conduct crimes against Iraqis of a Sunni background.



37-LIWA ALI AL AKBAR

Ali Al Akbar brigade was assembled in 2014, with direct supervision from Shi'i clerics loyal to Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani. Battles they have participated in include Taza, near Kirkuk, and its surrounding areas. Using their light to medium weapons they have been able to bomb civilians in inhabited towns, under the pretext of fighting IS.



38-HEZBOLLAH AL THA'RUN

The Insurgents of Hezbollah (IOH) was first founded back in 2006 - an off-shoot of Hezbollah in Iraq - participating in ethnic cleansing crimes alongside the Mehdi army during the bloodiest years (2006/7) known in Iraqi post-invasion history. While its activities grew quieter in the years after, it has recently re-emerged exercising similar tactics of extortion and forced displacement. Rahman Al Jazairi, with close inextricable ties to the Lebanese Hezbollah party, commands the IOH as its general-secretary.



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39-LIWA IMAM HUSSEIN

The Imam Hussein brigade is a Karbala based militia founded in 2014, led by a name known as Amjad Bahadli. While its headquarters are based in Iraq, the majority of its men are deployed in Damascus and East Ghouta bound, supporting Bashar Al Assad's forces. They fight under the false pretext of protecting religious sites including the Sayyeda Zainab shrine. In Iraq they have most notably fought in Jurf Al Sakhr, ethnically mixed Diyala and Salahddin, attacking Sunni homes and sites of worship. Membership is estimated at 2,500 fighters.



40-FAYLAQ AL WA'D ALSADIQ

Believed to have been founded in 2013, 'The Fulfilled Promise' corps (their English moniker) is directed under the command of Sheikh Ammar Al Haddad. With a near total of 2,500 recruits, the militia operates in both Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, its sites of operation include western Baghdad, Al Zidan and villages around Zoba'a, southern Fallujah. In those areas they are accused of having bulldozed orchards, and randomly arrested local males.



41-LIWA AI FATEMIYOUN

The roots of Fatemiyoun brigade is traceable back to Afghanistan in 2014 where the group first started forming under the direct supervision of IRGC advisors. Their involvement in Syria is vastly documented, unlike their activities inside Iraq. Since their formation in Afghanistan, the Afghan populated militia has branched out beyond Syria and into Iraq, sighted in Sunni majority areas in Salahuddin, Diyala and Baghdad belt.



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42-KATA'IB ANSAR ALLAH

It is believed that 'The Victors of God' brigade was established in the middle of 2014, under the direction of Munadhel Karim Al Shiblawi, commanding upwards of 2000 fighters. It has branches in Baghdad and the southern Iraqi provinces, and most its activities are concentrated in the belt of Baghdad, and Salahaddin. The group has committed acts of displacement, among other sectarian driven crimes.



43-LIWA ZULFIQAR

Founded in early 2013, Zulfiqar battalion came into existence to protect religious shrines in Syria. The reality shows that among the groups 2,000 recruits, a sizeable number have been fighting alongside Syrian regime forces. Commanding the group is Sheikh Abu Shahad Al Iraqi. In Iraq they have been seen mainly in Tikrit, Baiji and Jurf Al Sakhr. Weapons are provided to them by the Syrian regime.



44-LIWA AL IMAM HASSAN AL MUJTABA

Hassan Al Mujtaba brigade is a breakaway from Abu Fadhl Al Abbas working independently since 2013. The Shia militia has been embroiled in heavy fights in Damascus, Ghota, and Shebaa countryside but were initially deployed to protect Damascus international airport. In Iraq they have been seen fighting with PMU forces in southern Baghdad.



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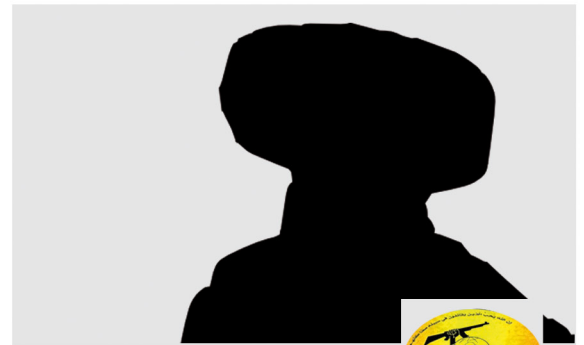
45-SARAYA TALIAA AL-KHORASANI

This branch of the bigger Khorasani militia is the armed wing of Iraq's new Islamic Taliaa party, led by Ali Mahdi Al-Yasiri. It was established under the supervision of the Iraqi Shiite cleric Mohammad Taqi Al Modarisi in 2013. The group has fought in Syria in support of Syrian regime forces around the shrine of Sayyeda Zainab and Ghouta. In Iraq they have been seen active in the town of Amerli, Suleiman, Beck, Ishaqi and Tuz Khurmatu in Salahuddin. Iran provides them with medium and light weaponry including sniper rifles, rocket launchers, and Iranian manufactured mortars. The group is made up of 3,500 fighters.



46-SARAYA AL DIFAA AL SHA'ABI

They arose first in Najaf back in 2014, but now have headquarters in Baghdad, Basra, Nasiriyah, Kut and Diyala. They have operated in Tal Afar (nearby Mosul), and areas south of Fallujah. Their ascent like many other militia elements inside Iraq, was inspired by Nouri Al Maliki's declaration of war against IS. They have performed an assisting role, helping Iraqi armed forces, and the PMU more recently to reclaim IS-held territories. Recruits number at 5,000, and include sons of Shi'i tribes from southern Iraq. While it is believed that they receive direct instructions from the Marja'aiyya in Najaf, behind closed doors, Hezbollah in Iraq is pulling its strings.



47-SARAYA AL JIHAD

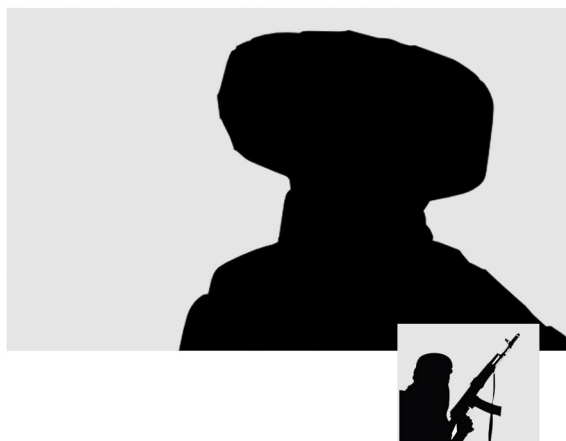
The 'Jihad Brigades' were founded by Hassan Al Sari and is aligned to the political 'Harakat Al Jihad Wa Al Bina' bloc. The group arose in response to Ammar Al Hakims call for the training of more militia volunteers and recruits. Their membership numbers are unknown, but the location of their activities and combat have been documented. In the past year, they participated in the storming of towns in Salahuddin with the PMU crowd looting and burning homes along their way.



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48-KATA'IB AL DIFA AL MUQADAS

The 'Holy Defence' battalions is a force of an estimated 3 to 4 thousand fighters founded in early 2014. The battalion is controlled by Abu Assadallah Al Aboudi with ideological leanings towards Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei. The group has fought in Syria alongside regime forces, and in Iran their activities have been limited to the regions of Anbar, Salahuddin, Diyala, and the Baghdad belt.



49-LIWA KAFEEL ZAINAB

This militia first sprang into action in Syria, 2012, moulded by the hands of Iraqi commander Abu Musa Al Amiri. Prior to his role in guiding 'Kafeel Zainab' brigade, Amiri acquired a bloody reputation due to his involvement in Iraq's spike in sectarian violence between 2006/7, in collaboration with the Mehdi Army. He died in 2014 during battles against IS in Garma, eastern Fallujah. His 1,300 man brigade still continues its missions in partnership with PMU.



50-LIWA IMAM AL GHA'IB

The 'Absent Imam' (AI) brigade is a Hezbollah affiliated militia based in Iraq. Sites of operation include Tharthar and Garma (east of Fallujah) as well as parts of Salahuddin and northern Baghdad. AI is also closely aligned to PMU forces and has teamed up with them, allegedly engaging in acts of looting and arson in Albou Ajeel, Dour, and Tikrit.



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51-LIWA AL BITAR

Commanded by Sheikh Haidar Gharawi, Bitar brigade is another armed Shia militia founded in 2014 that operates in (south of) Baghdad, Salahaddin, and Anbar. The number of its current recruits stands at 4000.



52-LIWA AL BITTAR

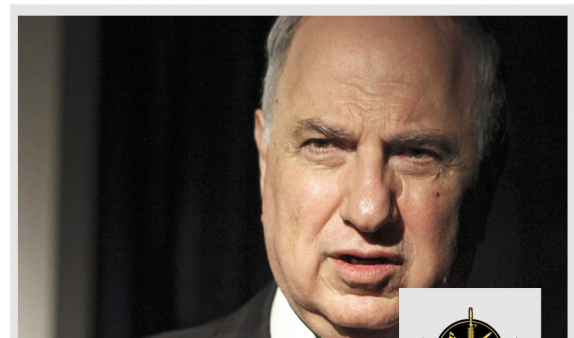
This Shi'i armed group is not to be confused with the Libyan IS-front terrorist group, both of whom share the name 'Lawa Al Bittar' (LAB). LAB is another Iraqi based militia founded by Fatim Abdul- Moftin in 2014. It has fought in battles across Salahuddin, Diyala provinces and Anbar.



53-FIRAQ AI MAWT

Firq al Mawt, also known as death squads, were established early into America's 2003 invasions. They were born out of an alliance between CIA sponsored Ahmad Chalabi and Moqtada Al Sadr, and Chalabi's undisclosed alliance with the IRGC. Iran provided both men with the funds needed to arm these squads, with recruits drawn from Sadr's Mehdi army. These gangs unleashed unspeakable savagery and brutality, responsible for the assassination of ordinary civilians, and abductions of former members of the Baath party. Many of the gangs were carved out by members connected to Iraq's ministry of interior.

In September 2015 an armed group calling themselves 'death squad' released a video of 18 Turkish construction workers they had taken hostage after they were kidnapped from Baghdad. These groups include highly skilled assassins and individuals connected to political establishment. These death squads killed thousands of people and established torture chambers for the hundreds they abducted. Sectarian cleansing was high on their priority list, as well as extra-judicial killings.



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CONCLUSION

The above list of militias is by no means exhaustive, but covers the largest operating Iranian backed outfits in Iraq. At least 10 other smaller militia bands exist, charged with menial tasks such as armed robberies, setting of fake checkpoints, and providing information to the more established militia. The vast majority of these groups belong to official political parties and blocs across the country, many of whom are backed by Iran.

The names of these groups are listed below :

- Harakat Al Nujaba
- The Supreme Council for the Liberation of Iraq Movement
- Mujahideen Movement
- Imam Rabbani Movement
- Hezbollah Movement
- Saraya Al-Waad Al-sadiq
- Shiite Shield Brigade
- Al-Sabreen Movement
- Al-Hamd Brigade
- Al-Sadiqeen Brigade



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